

MEMORIAL

OF THE

DIRECTORS OF THE BOARD OF TRADE OF PITTSBURG,

That the navigation of the Ohio river be improved upon a plan commensurate with the importance of trade and transportation on that river.

MAY 5, 1836.

Referred to the Committee on Roads and Canals, and ordered to be printed.

To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States :

The memorial of the subscribers, the Directors of the Board of Trade of the city of Pittsburg,

RESPECTFULLY REPRESENTS :

That the association of which they are members, comprising a large portion of the mercantile and manufacturing interest of the city of Pittsburg, have taken into consideration the great and growing importance of a safe and uninterrupted navigation of the Ohio river, and authorized your memorialists to solicit such renewed action of Congress as will ensure an early and certain accomplishment of this great object.

The importance of the trade which is annually carried on upon this great river, from Pittsburg to its mouth, thence to New Orleans, and to the headwaters of the Missouri and Mississippi, and returning again to Pittsburg, renders the various interests of those millions who are affected by it of great national consideration. Passing through six States of the Union, and, in its course of one thousand miles, receiving seventeen navigable streams, the value of the annual transportation by the main stem of the river is beyond calculation ; and the tonnage of the hundred steamboats continually descending and returning, has exceeded all the predictions which a few years ago were pronounced visionary and extravagant. Yet, great as are the results now known, when we take into view the many millions of inhabitants that are destined to occupy the vast lands of the West, and enlarge the trade and intercourse upon the river, none of the present realities can bear a comparison with the expectations which may be justly entertained of the future.

Silks, cottons, woollens, iron and all its various manufactures, glass, china, paints, flour, fruits, coal, lumber, and every conceivable variety of

mechanical production required by the wants of civilized man, furnish the materials of the downward freights, while the rich returns of cotton, sugar, iron manufactured, tobacco, lead, hemp, hides, flour, bacon, bullion, &c., give an activity and importance to the upward voyage scarcely inferior: yet has all this trade been compelled to encounter, from year to year, the most serious inconveniences and losses from the delay and accidents occasioned by natural obstructions in the bed of the river, which might be readily lessened, if not entirely subdued, by artificial improvements.

Your memorialists duly appreciate the liberality which Congress has already evinced in the appropriation of \$50,000 towards a commencement of this work, and, from this evidence of an awakening sense of its national importance, they confidently hope that no future effort and appropriation will be withheld requisite to its consummation, embracing the most permanent, extensive, and national benefits.

As the whole river is the channel of a continuous and connected trade, it is essential that the whole course of this highway be at all times, in all its parts, navigable. The interruption at a single shoal or bar is an interruption of the whole navigation. These interruptions increase in proportion as the ascent is towards Pittsburg, not (as it is admitted from every experience) from the diminution of the supply of water, so much as an increase in the rapidity of the current. From these causes, it is requisite that the commencement of the work should be at Pittsburg, and the largest amount of money expended in the upper parts of the river.

The chief obstructions are bars of gravel and pebbles thrown up by high freshets, causing, in some places, such strong currents as to render steamboats unmanageable in the lower stages of water; and, in other places, the abundant stream is scattered over so broad a space as to become too shallow for any useful navigation. Whether the best mode of removing or remedying these disadvantages be in operating merely in the channel of the river, or in a system of dams and locks, the amount of cost ought to produce no hesitation in adopting that system which will be most certain and permanent. Taking into view all these impediments, it is not doubted but that it is perfectly within the power of human enterprise and skill to accomplish, for the people of the United States, a safe, uniform, and certain steamboat navigation through the course of the whole river in the driest seasons.

This great project, therefore, presents itself appropriately to the peculiar attention of Congress, involving, as we must admit, an expenditure far beyond the conception of those who would be content with the imperceptible progress which the annual appropriation of \$50,000 would permit.

We conceive that the work, to deserve the character of a national improvement, will require many millions of dollars, and that nowhere within our Union can such sums be more beneficially applied, and no object of general solicitude presents a higher claim upon the surplus revenue of the General Government.

Your memorialists, therefore, entertaining in common with many of their fellow-citizens, a deep interest in this undertaking, would respectfully pray that the improvement of the navigation of the Ohio river, upon a system commensurate with the existing and expanding wants of a great

people, and having in view durability equal to its importance, will be immediately taken up and acted upon by Congress, as a great and necessary measure of national wisdom and policy.

Samuel Fahnestock
T. B. Wainwright
James W. Brown
Jacob Forsyth
A. Brackenridge
M. B. Miltenberger
D. M. Hogan
George Ogden
Samuel P. Darlington

B. A. Fahnestock
Samuel Baird
J. W. Burbridge
John Andoe
George Grant
William G. Alexander
William Bagaley
T. Myers,

*The Directors of the Board of Trade
of the city of Pittsburg.*

